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SUBJECT: HEALTH MINISTER PARIRENYATWA FOCUSES ON POLITICAL
IMPASSE

Classified By: Joseph Gerard Sullivan for reasons 1.5b/d

11. (C) Summary: At one-on-one lunch Nov 14, Health Minister David Parirenyatwa acknowledged to the Ambassador that Zimbabwe's deep social, economic and humanitarian crises could not be resolved without addressing Zimbabwe's equally deep political crisis. He doubted that Zimbabweans could resolve their political crisis on their own and suggested that major powers such as the US and UK needed to take a hand. His early ideas for resolution led, unsurprisingly, with international and domestic recognition of Mugabe's legitimacy, but he did not exclude other ideas and was very interested in promoting dialogue to address the political crisis. Comment: Parirenyatwa is not a political heavy, but does hold strong liberation credentials and has been a voice of reason on health issues and even on GM/BT maize where Mugabe turned to him to override the extremist advice of Agriculture Minister Made and Information Minister Jonathan Moyo. End Summary

2.(U) Parirenyatwa and the Ambassador began by discussing a number of operational issues on health cooperation where Parirenyatwa was his usual thoughtful and cooperative self on these issues. In the course of these discussions, Parirenyatwa noted that he was struggling to get increases in his health budget, but that inflation was rapidly eroding the value of these increases. He also noted that his foreign exchange limitations were even more extreme. While the EU would be providing basic medicines, his clinics now often lacked stethoscopes.

3.(C) The Ambassador then turned to a conversation begun at a large dinner several weeks before to note that resolution of Zimbabwe's many crisis could only come with resolution of the country's political crisis. Parirenyatwa, unlike many of his ZANU-PF colleagues, did not disagree, but urged taking into account Zimbabwe's historical context; i.e. the need for land redistribution. He conceded that the land redistribution contained many errors, but that distribution of multiple plots to individuals was a problem which was being corrected through an ongoing land audit. While not contesting questions regarding the freedom and fairness of elections, he claimed that the MDC's refusal to accept election results had damaged prospects for a political rapprochement. (Comment: not very credible since GOZ repressive legislation had already been put in place.)

4.(C) Parirenyatwa, acknowledging that political polarization was extreme, doubted that Zimbabweans had the ability to overcome their differences on their own. He suggested, instead, that major international players like the US and UK bring their weight to bear to put together a solution. He noted that IMF and World Bank presence and loans were critical and that US support would be necessary for this to happen; he said that the GOZ's economic policies could change quickly if it was not functioning as an economy under siege. He suggested that Presidents Bush and Mugabe could meet to find a solution to the problems. The Ambassador replied that no one should expect President Bush to meet with President Mugabe, but that the Ambassador was available to dialogue with anyone in the Party or the Government who recognized that there was a crisis and was interested in finding solutions. The Ambassador suggested that the two political parties needed to find ways to address Zimbabwe's national emergency together and that ZANU-PF had to cease efforts to crush the opposition.

15. (C) Comment: Minister Parirenyatwa is son of the first black doctor in Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. His father was Vice President of ZAPU before there was a ZANU and consequently Minister Parirenyatwa's liberation credentials are impeccable. He is not a political heavyweight, but is someone Mugabe listens to, particularly on health and technical issues. This conversation reflects the growing recognition among some Government insiders of the hole they are in and the beginning of recognition of the need to address the country's political crisis by other than crushing the opposition. Parirenyatwa shows too much inclination to find the solution outside the country rather than with fellow Zimbabweans and he still believes it important that Mugabe be part of a political solution. We will continue talking to Parirenyatwa and others in an effort to promote more thinking within ZANU-PF on dealing seriously with the political crisis.

SULLIVAN